

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s): decent

Classify: () In Part (X) In Full

Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

UNCLASSIFIED

Argentina

AQ015

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Description of the Human Rights conditions in the country: The human rights situation in Argentina has improved over previous years but remains serious. Most seriously, fundamental, internationally-recognized rights of the integrity of the person have been violated through the application of the security forces of the tactic of disappearance. The number of confirmed disappearances registered in Argentina this year total eleven but there are unconfirmed reports of twenty-two or more. This total is in contrast to the many thousands who disappeared in 1976 and 1977, more than 600 in 1978 and 44 in 1979. There continue to be reliable indications that individuals detained as suspected terrorists or subversives are subject to torture. There has been no accounting for past disappearances.

The number of detainees on other than common criminal charges has been reduced, although the numbers remaining are still significant. Since 1974, 8,200 people accused of terrorism or subversion have been detained under the special executive powers of the President. By September 1980, prisoners accused of other than common crimes totaled 1,700 to 1,800. Of these about 750 were being held without trial, some for many years or after having served their sentences. About 600 had been tried and convicted in military or civilian courts and another 400 were in trial status. The right of option program, which allows qualified prisoners to choose self-exile in lieu of detention, has been greatly restricted by Argentine Government regulations. As a result, of the 277 prisoners who have qualified for the U.S. Hemispheric Parole Program, only 82 persons have been able to travel to the United States.

Prison conditions have improved, although there is still concern over psychological conditions which may have been a factor in a number of suicides. Earlier complaints regarding overcrowding, lack of medical treatment, improper food, and restrictions on visits have been largely resolved.

The opportunities for the exercise of political freedoms remain circumscribed by the prohibition on political activities and de facto limits on the freedom of expression. Within uncertain limits, politicians and the press increasingly voiced criticism of the Government's actions and plans. Occasionally politicians were detained on the grounds that they had overstepped the limits of the law. The military designated the President for the period 1981-1984, while reiterating its ultimate commitment to return the country to civilian rule. However, no date has been fixed for that devolution.

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